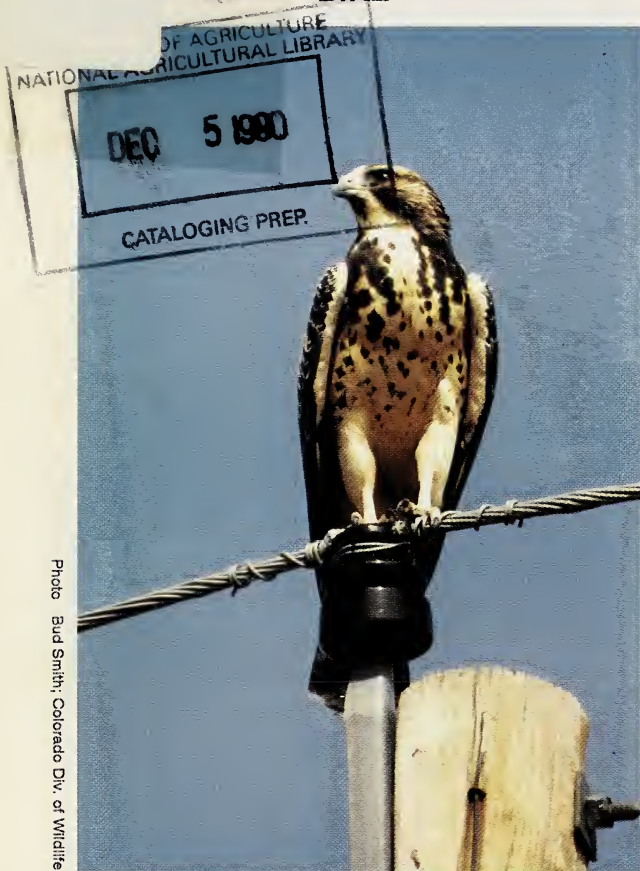


Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

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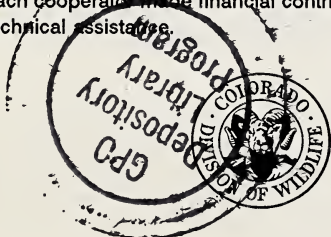
BIRDING ON THE PAWNEE AUTOMOBILE OR MOUNTAIN BIKE



Swainson's Hawk

WELCOME, we invite you to explore the Pawnee National Grassland and observe the many species of birds which make their homes here year-round or seasonally. May and June are the best months for your visit to see the widest variety of species.

This brochure was produced by the USDA Forest Service in cooperation with the Greeley Audubon Society and Colorado Division of Wildlife. Each cooperator made financial contributions and provided technical assistance.





The Pawnee Self-Guided Birding Tour is 36 miles long and passes through a variety of bird habitats. A leisurely tour would take from three to four and one-half hours to complete by motor vehicle. The tour is also suitable for mountain bikes. The kinds of birds found will depend upon the season of the year, weather conditions, and time of day (early morning and late afternoon are best).

Horned larks, small sparrow-like birds, are very abundant and found year-round. Lark Buntings, the Colorado state bird, are also very common in the spring and summer. Resident raptors--red-tailed and ferruginous hawks, prairie falcons, and golden eagles--are often seen. Swainson's hawks will be seen in the spring and summer, while rough-legged hawks are only here in the winter.



Horned Lark

TO FOLLOW THE TOUR ROUTE, PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO YOUR MAP AND ODOMETER. WET WEATHER CAN MAKE SOME OF THE ROADS IMPASSABLE. LOCAL INQUIRY AT THE DISTRICT OFFICE OR BRIGGSDALE WORK CENTER IS SUGGESTED BEFORE YOU START THE TOUR.

The following numbers refer to points of interest as shown on the tour map:

1. From the Crow Valley Recreation Area just north of Highway 14 near Briggsdale, go north on Weld County Highway 77. For the next three miles, loggerhead shrikes, American kestrels and mourning doves are usually found perched on telephone wires, fence posts, and in the trees. Shrikes may be recognized by their undulating (flap-flap-closed wing drop-flap-flap) flight pattern.
2. Turn west (left) at Weld County Road 96 (dirt road). For the first one mile check both north and south for mountain plovers. They like shortgrass prairie and are fairly common in this area. The next mile you will be crossing land not administered by the Forest Service; please stay on the road.
3. About a mile after you leave Highway 77, you will cross a cattleguard. Stop and carefully scan the area north of the road for long-billed curlews. They occasionally nest on the Grassland when ponds are filled by excess run-off water during wet years.
 - 3a. If your vehicle has good above-ground clearance and road conditions are favorable, you may want to take a short one-mile side trip on Road 759 to Murphy Reservoir. On the way to the reservoir, look for curlews and mountain plovers. About one-fourth mile up Road 759, you will encounter a gate. If the gate is closed, please close it after passing through. If it is open, please leave it open. At the reservoir, various shore birds such as killdeer, avocet, sandpiper, and phalarope have been sighted. Ducks, including teal, mallard, and pintail, may also be present. From April through June, please minimize disturbance to nesting birds so they can raise their young. After viewing the reservoir, return to stop #3. Proceed west (right) on Road 96 for 1-1/2 miles to a cattle-guard.
4. To the north (right) you will see a pasture that was planted with crested wheatgrass after the Federal government purchased the abandoned farms, during the late 1930's or early 1940's. The pasture was once a wheat field similar to the field you see on private land to the south and west. Fields were planted with perennial crested wheatgrass to reduce water and wind erosion of the soil. Crested wheatgrass stabilizes the soil and provides forage for livestock and wildlife. For the next 1-1/2 miles, check the fence line for different species of sparrows (savannah, grasshopper and Cassin's). Sparrows present a tricky identification problem, especially, if they won't sit still while you are trying to identify them.

On the right, you will pass an abandoned homestead. It is on private land so please stay on the road. Imagine your family in a small rock house with only one small tree for protection. How would you and your family have survived? Continue west past the cattle-guard for approximately 3/4 of a mile.

5. At the intersection, turn north (right) on Road 69. Check the ponds located east and west of the road for waterfowl. Continue north on Road 69 for a mile to #6 and Road 98. In mid-June, be alert for mountain plover chicks. If traveling by mountain bike, this may be a good place to head back to Crow Valley Recreation Area. If so, turn south (left) and travel 3 miles to Highway 14, and then about 4.25 miles east to Crow Valley.
6. Looking west (left), you will see a grove of trees; this stop is an example of a seasonal road closure for wildlife protection. The vehicle access (Road 98) to the grove is closed during the raptor nesting season (March 1 through June 30) to minimize human disturbance to nesting birds.

Continue about a mile up Road 69 to #7.

7. To the west (left) is a windmill and abandoned homestead. The shrubs and trees are the remains of a homesteader's windbreak. The Forest Service has fenced many of these areas to protect the trees and shrubs from livestock damage. The trees and shrubs provide nest sites for birds and cover for rabbits and other animals.

From #7 proceed north about 1-1/2 miles, then turn east (right) on Road toward a windmill near stop #8.

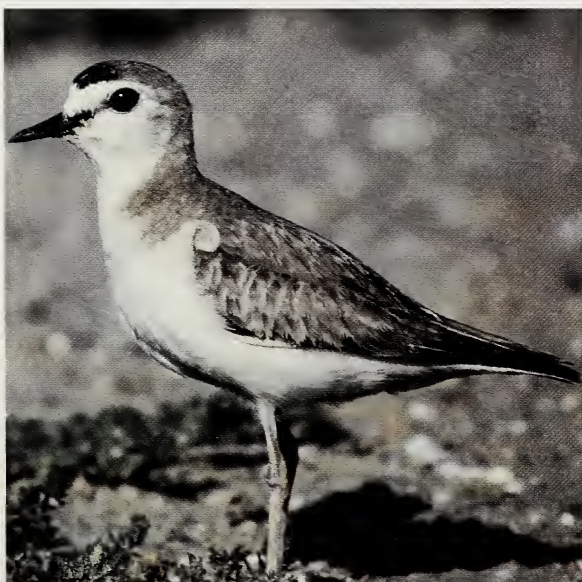
8. The Howard prairie dog town provides habitat for burrowing owls. The best time to see the owls is early morning and late evening. Prairie dogs may not be present. Almost all prairie dogs in this town died during 1989, probably from plague, a fairly common, naturally occurring disease of rodents in the Western United States.

If you choose to spend some time here, please park at least 100 yards from the windmill so that cattle can get water from the tank. If you look in the stock tank, you should see some cement bars. These are animal escape ramps that allow birds or rodents to get out of a tank if they fall in while getting a drink. The Forest Service and ranchers try to keep cement escape ramps or floating perches in all livestock tanks for the benefit of wildlife.

To continue, return to the main road and turn north (right).

9. At the intersection of Roads 69 and 104, a good population of McCown's longspurs might be observed. Turn west (left) onto Road 104 and proceed about 1-1/4 miles to #10. You will cross a cattleguard in about one mile.
10. To the south (left), is a small dirt dam which was constructed during the 1930's or 1940's by the Civilian Conservation Corps or the Works Project Administration. Its purpose was to control flooding, reduce soil erosion, and provide water for livestock.

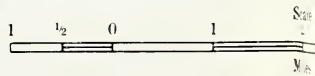
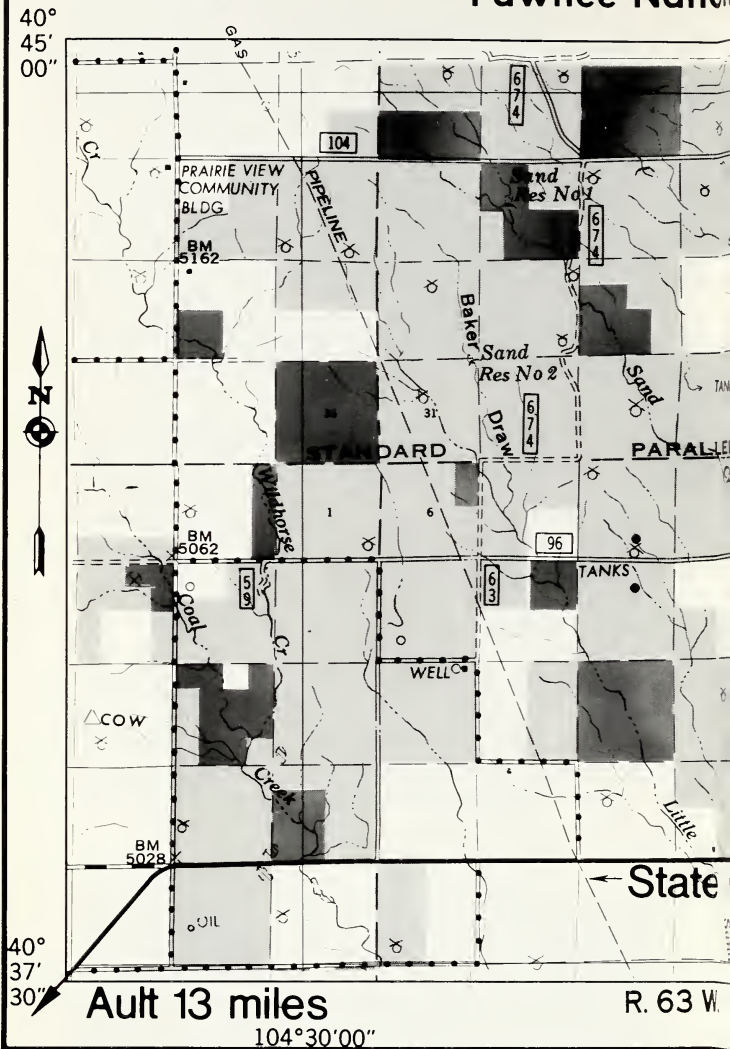
During the next 2.75 miles you will cross numerous small drainages. Check the cutbanks along the drainages and the roads for rock wrens.
11. Where the terrain flattens is a good area to observe nesting chestnut-collared longspurs.
12. At the intersection of Roads 57 and 104, turn south (left) onto Road 57. The white building to the southwest is the Prairie View Community Building, a former grade school. Check the fence posts and telephone posts for prairie falcons, American kestrels, and Swainson's hawks. Proceed south four miles to the intersection of Roads 57 and 96; then turn left and travel east for two miles. Turn south on Road 61. In about 1-1/2 miles, there is another prairie dog town.
13. If you missed seeing burrowing owls in the Howard prairie dog town, there may be some here. This area is good mountain plover habitat. From here, proceed south two miles to Highway 14, which completes the tour.



Wendy Shattil/Bob Fozinski c 1990

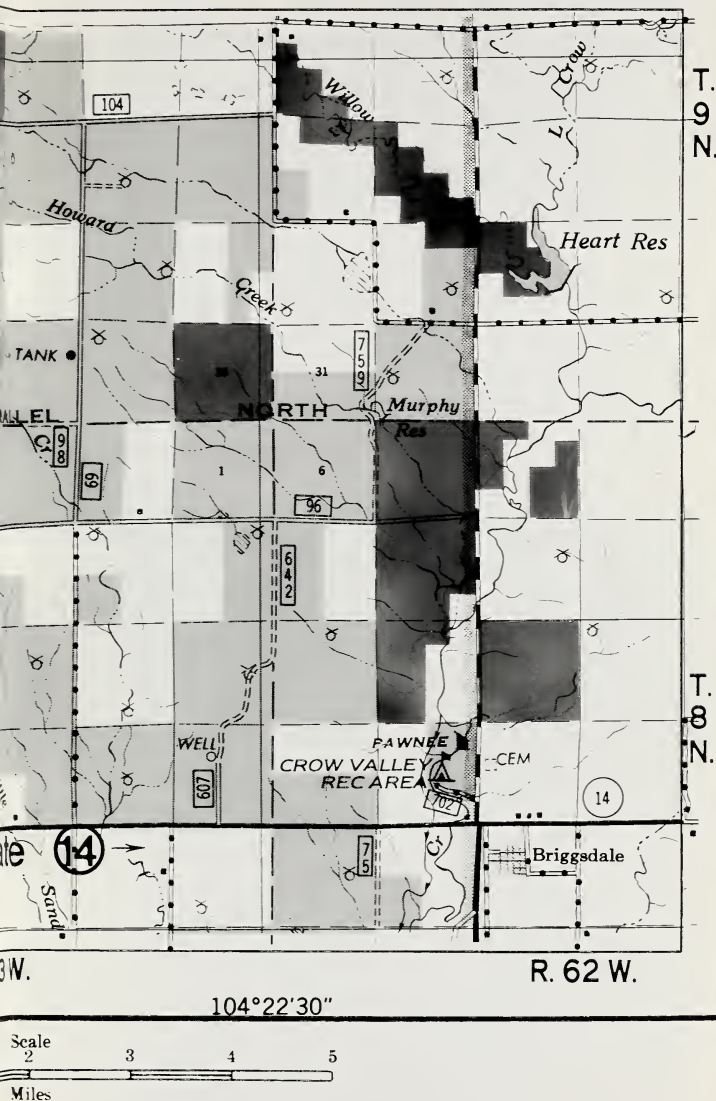
Mountain Plover

Pawnee Nation








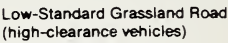

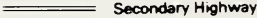









The Pawnee National Grassland is scattered over a 30 by 60 mile area in northeast Weld County. The Grassland is intermingled with private land and consists of 193,060 acres that are administered by the Forest Service, United States Department of Agriculture. Recreation visitor maps of the Pawnee National Grassland are for sale at Forest Service Offices. The map has helpful hints on how to use and enjoy the Pawnee National Grassland. A bird checklist is available at the Pawnee District Office (303) 353-5004 and the Briggsdale Work Center adjacent to Crow Valley Recreation Area, (303) 656-3532.

ational Grassland



Generally, motorized vehicle travel within the Pawnee National Grassland is restricted to numbered roads. Look for upright flat, brown, fiberglass posts with white numbers to identify Forest Service roads. Motorized vehicles can travel 300 feet off roads to camp or picnic. Weld County uses green and white signs to number its roads.

LEGEND

-  National Grassland Boundary
-  State Highway
-  County Road
-  Primary Grassland Road
-  Secondary Grassland Road
-  Low-Standard Grassland Road
(high-clearance vehicles)
-  Primary Highway
-  Secondary Highway
-  Improved Road, Paved
-  Improved Road, Gravel
-  Improved Road, Dirt
-  Unimproved Road
-  House, Cabin or Other Building
-  School, Windmill
-  Oil or Gas Well, Water Well
-  Pawnee National Grassland-land with restrictions
on travel (See TRAVEL ON THE GRASSLAND)
-  State Land Subject to Leasing
(permission of leasee required to enter)

